Sacrificial Lamb

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Sacrificial Lamb

by Stranded_In_The_Cosmos

Summary

Hannibal is a God known for his taste in human sacrifices and his tempestuous nature. Every season, the local town must give him one human to keep his favor and keep him from decimating them. This winter, Abigail is called up to be sacrifice, but Will takes her place.

With a plan to kill the god, or wound him dearly, he goes off. But the night may not end in blood, seeing as the old god is incredibly interested in Will, for reasons other than to eat him.

At this rate, it may have been kinder to just have been eaten.

Notes

I made myself cry T^T

See the end of the work for more notes

In Which, the Lamb is Chosen For Slaughter

Will looked at the darkening skies with dread. It was only five in the evening, how could it be so dark already? So cold? In truth he knew, but he could hardly believe it. There was no way winter could have snuck up on him like this, but as he watched the first snowflake fall, he knew it was true.

Winter had arrived, and with that, the winter sacrifice.

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Now, Will didn't know how long it had been going on, how long various people, varying levels of innocence, had been fed to sate the beast, but he knew the tradition well. It was, after all, what had taken his mother, and then his father.

At the start of every season, one adult from their little town was randomly selected for the honor of keeping destruction at bay. The specificity of the age came from a terrible incident generations ago, when a desperate man made his son take his place as sacrifice. He wasn't more than a boy, eleven at best. The Beast had ravaged the town for weeks after the offense. The monster at least had some standards. So now only adults were allowed to take the place of the randomly drawn, but that never truly happened. Aside from the aging parents who would trade places with their adult children in a heartbeat, no one traded places with the dead, no matter how you liked them.

Will pulled his jacket tighter and shivered, though not fully from the cold.

Abigail was nineteen now, he remembered the nervous breakdown she had putting her name into the box for the first time. He had held her, but he couldn't look her in the eye, he knew her fear was more than just of chance.

It wasn't likely she would be drawn, so young and with so many others to be picked instead, but his heart raced. He prayed to the gods that they would be kind and leave Abigail alone.

"Thank you all for being here," Sheriff Crawford wearily spoke. Twenty long years of this, Will had seen it slowly grind him down. "It's not the most joyous of occasions, but we'll be thankful for whoever takes on the duty of keeping Hannibal's favor for another season, and we'll celebrate their sacrifice when it is all over. It is an honor so much as it is duty to be chosen for this,"

"Do you think the gods will bless us with getting Francis picked this winter?" Abigail joked dryly, not truly meaning it, no matter how she hated Dolarhyde.

"I'll give my summer catch of fish to them if they do," Will smiled, tense.

"Pray they listen and are kind," Abigail said, leaving no space for further conversation. Will didn't blame her, what was there to talk about in this tense moment? Nothing truly dashed the fear away except for the announcement of the sacrifice. And even that was temporary.

Sheriff Crawford took his hat off and dropped a bag full of tiny papers into it. Names were written on the little strips of paper, a fingernail sized death sentence. “May the gods be with you all,” He announced, mixing the names, and then blindly grabbing one from the hat.

Will’s breathing stopped, and for a moment all of time seemed to slow.

“This year’s sacrifice is…” Sheriff Crawford took a deep breath. “Abigail Hobbs,”

Will’s heart stopped dead in his chest. No, it couldn’t be. Not a chance it could be, it had to be wrong, it just couldn’t be this way.

When he looked to Abigail and knew it was, her face was marred with horror, and acceptance. He wanted to scream, damn the gods for it, impart his wrath upon them for once. She had never done anything to deserve the fate, not a goddamn thing.

Before Will was fully aware of himself he was turning heel, running to Sheriff Crawford with a speed he didn’t realize he was capable of.

“Sheriff Crawford!” Will shouted, panting. “Sheriff Crawford, it can’t- you can’t- Abigail can’t. She’s too young Sheriff, she’s hardly grown Sheriff, she can’t go, she’s just nineteen Sheriff,”

Sheriff Crawford shook his head. “Sorry Will, she’s grown enough for this, according to our laws. Unless you know of someone willing to take her place, there’s nothing I can-”

“I am,” Will said, without the slightest hesitation. A gasp left the crowd. “I am willing, I don’t have much to live for, don’t make her go, take me, I don’t have a reason not to go,”

Sheriff Crawford solemnly nodded. “You don’t have to beg Will, it’s not necessary. If you wish, you’ll take Abigail’s place,” He took Will’s hands and gripped them tight. “May the gods guide you safely and be kind to you, may your winds be fair and your currents swift,”

He let go of Will’s hands, leaving a small knife in Will’s palms. He gave Will a small nod, and turned back to the crowd. “We have our sacrifice, we thank Will for his service, and wish him fair winds and swift currents,”

There was noise from the crowd but Will wasn’t listening. He stumbled off, clutching the knife Sheriff Crawford gave him, wondering its purpose.

“Will fucking Graham!” Abigail shouted from behind him. He turned and nearly winced at her face, she was crying, and he knew that he had been the one to make her cry. “How *dare* you?”

“Abigail please, I couldn’t have let you-” Will was cut off by a sharp slap to his cheek. That was new, Abigail had never been violent with him before. But he understood it, it wasn’t meant to harm, she was just full to bursting with emotion. He knew the feeling well.

“When my dad was given up you were all I had left, you were all I had for years and years, and now you’re leaving me too?” Abigail cried, falling into Will’s arms. He held her close to his chest. “How dare you leave me, how dare you take my place?”

Will pet Abigail's hair, soothing her gently. "I couldn't have let you do it. You've got a whole life in front of you, you've got the dogs and Marissa, and Beverly will take care of you. You have so much potential Abigail," Tears welled in his eyes. "I always knew it, even when you wouldn't talk to me because I had taken your dad away, even then I knew I loved you and would do anything to see what you grew up to be,"

"Stop it," Abigail wept. "Stop it Will,"

"And when you let me comfort you while you cried, I knew I would try to protect you from pain and harm,"

"You bastard, stop it,"

"And I know I can't do that anymore," Will gently rocked back and forth, trying to soothe a pain that could never be soothed. "God knows I'll regret never seeing what you do, or being there to help you, but I'd rather you be here without me than the other way around. I've never had much of a reason to exist, I was just a lonely fisherman, who lived with too many dogs and never talked to anyone. But, if all my life amounts to is saving you, then I can't have asked for anything better, "

"Take it back Will, let me go," Abigail begged. "Don't do this,"

"I love you, Abigail Hobbs. I hope, in some other time, we'll cross paths again and I can stay with you as long as I psychically can. I love you,"

Abigail sobbed, breaking Will's heart with the sounds of her sorrow. "I hate you, I fucking hate you, you're the most awful man I've had to know, I hate-"

"It's okay, Abigail, it's okay," Will lowered them to the ground, pulling her closer as she spilled her grief.

"It's not okay," She wept. "It's never going to be okay,"

And it wasn't okay, Will knew that, but she'd get over him, hopefully. She would live a long, happy life, never getting sent to Hannibal, never facing much hardship, if only the gods would grant Will's prayers. To be merciful and kind. He would give, and had given, his life for hers.

"It will be okay,"

In Which, The Lamb Is Prepared And Sent For Slaughter, And Asked to Wound The Butcher

Chapter Summary

Will prepares for his death, Jack has a favor to ask.

Chapter Notes

We're back at it again, making myself cry with writing.

The process of preparing for the sacrifice was a highly personal, private one. Of course, they had their traditions and customs, plenty of them, but it was family and close friends who helped the chosen get ready. Strangers helped, in the way of providing materials and prayers, food and comfort, but they were not involved directly. Will had no family left, unless you counted Abigail, though she may not want to be counted, and Price, Zeller, and Beverly were the little friends he'd managed to gather. But it was good that way, Will was happy with his little slice of relationships, and he'd ask no one else to help him prepare.

First, he was to be cleaned. Hannibal was particular in how his sacrifices tasted; he left poor Franklyn torn in half on Sherrif Crawford's doorstep over his aftershave, and stole a young person from their home as replacement. Tragic, Hannibal didn't care if his meals were shaved, it shouldn't have happened, but it did, and so they knew better for next time.

So, gentle soap, no smell, nothing but it. And thorough rinsing, it wouldn't do to be rejected.

Sheriff Crawford came at noon to deliver the sacrificial gown.

They were white, honoring Aconite, who delivered the dead through the freezing white cold to the end. Embroidered in a shining white thread were various symbols, prayers to gods for numerous things. Good weather, good harvest, safety for Will's loved ones, even after all of these years Will could not name them all off the top of his head. He could read them though, easily.

"Sheriff," Will greeted stiffly, tucking his thin flannel closer. He wasn't upset with Crawford, it wasn't even his fault his presence felt like an intrusion. But nonetheless he wanted the man off of his doorstep as soon as possible. "Thank you for bringing it,"

Sheriff Crawford handed him the folded clothing. "Of course Will, it's the very least I could do-"

“I will be seeing you sheriff,” Will began to close the door, and was stopped by Sheriff Crawford’s foot blocking the door.

“Will,” Sheriff Crawford sighed. “I gave you a knife yesterday, remember?”

Will certainly did, he could still feel it’s weight in his hands.

“Do you still have it?”

Will nodded, suspicious.

“Good,” Sheriff Crawford leaned in close, and began whispering to Will. “I’m asking you a favor, Will, begging you even. I have been doing this sacrifice business for 20 years, watching friends and family go to Hannibal and never return. Or if they do, it’s like a cat leaving you a dead mouse on the doorstep without any of the love,”

Will raised an eyebrow. “What’s the meaning of this? I have to get ready Sheriff, while I thank you for your kindness you are intruding on-”

“*I know*,” Sheriff Crawford hissed. “But I gave you it for a reason. I am willing to give the gods a manner of things but Hannibal gives us nothing in return for our loss besides not getting destroyed. You can’t kill a god Will, but you can hurt it. I want you to hurt Hannibal, slash his throat, take an eye, hurt him Will, that’s all I ask,” He took Will’s hand and gripped it tight. “We’ve all lost so much to Hannibal,”

Will shook his head, pulling his hand back. “And anger him? Enrage him? Make him ravage us again? I will *not* dash away what I’ve done to keep Abigail safe, sheriff. If you wish to hurt him, hurt him yourself. I will not risk Abigail, and I will not kill everyone for momentary justice,”

Will tried closing the door but again found it blocked.

“Look you don’t have to, but consider,” Sheriff Crawford pleaded. “Consider it Will, I can’t make you, but if you could even have one of his eyes, you’d be taking something from him like he has taken from us, consider it,”

Will shook his head. “Good day Sheriff, may your winds be fair,” He spat, and finally shut the door with a loud noise.

“What was that about Will?” Beverly called from the living room.

“Nothing Bev,” Will reentered the room. Abigail quietly sat on the floor, petting Winston’s fur. Price and Zeller were weaving winter flowers and pine needles to create a small crown that Will would wear. Soft music played, some story about a maiden and a beast being crooned into the small space. “Just Sheriff Crawford delivering the gown,”

“You two were talking for an awfully long while,” Beverly pointed out, taking the gown from Will and unfolding it and holding it in front of Will, making sure the gown would fit him. She nodded her approval.

“It’s nothing Beverly, just the Sheriff’s blessings for us,”

Beverly raised an eyebrow but said nothing further on the subject. “We’ll thank him for the blessings. Now, let's get you dressed, we’ve still got to get you fed and Abigail still needs to set up the basket of offerings-”

“Let Zeller do it, Abigail-”

“-Is perfectly well to prepare the basket,” Abigail interrupted. “Just because I don’t want you to go doesn’t mean I won’t do my duty in helping you prepare,”

“Abigail, I was just…” Will sighed. “I know it’s hard, I’m not gonna pretend it’s not hard. I know it’s hard. And if you don’t want to help I won’t make you,”

Abigail huffed and crossed her arms. “I’m not wasting my last hours with you Will. Go get dressed and if you want you can help me with the basket, if I’m not done with it when you’re ready,”

Will nodded, letting himself be dragged along by Beverly.

He wished he could make it better for her. At least, he wished she would let him comfort her one more time. But, he understood why she couldn’t let down her guard, why she wouldn’t do it with him. Not now.

When he was dressed, he ate warm soup and sweet baked apples while he helped Abigail prepare the basket that would be offered to Hannibal alongside Will. Hannibal was particular about how they tasted, and he seemed to like the combination of foods the best this time of year.

Somehow, despite it all, in the small moment, they had some peace, the sacrifice hung over their head, but for a moment, it was just another day for them.

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Will stood at the mouth of the forest. It was near midnight now, the moon shone full and bright, glistening against the snow.

Mouth really did feel like the correct word, the trees seemed to surround them like massive green jaws. The little path that had been worn in over the centuries, by other souls who had given everything to keeping their family and friends safe, looked like a small suffocating throat. Like that of a python.

Will could hear noises of celebration from the town, but it felt so far away here, his face freezing, the heavy basket of wine and the remains of the fall harvest in his hands, the pine needles sticking into his head, all of it grounded him in this moment.

“Well, Will,” Sheriff Crawford spoke. “This is it, we won’t be seeing you again, and we’ll miss you dearly Will, but we thank you heartily for your sacrifice. May your journey with Aconite be short and comfortable,”

“Thank you Jack,” Will said softly. “You’ve been very kind throughout it all,”

“It’s my job Will, to see that you get here comfortably, what happens after is out of my hands,” Jack looked at him knowingly. Will knew he wasn’t referring to the ravaging he’d be subject to once Hannibal caught his scent.

“Well my point stands,”

Will turned away from Sheriff Crawford, and to his band of mismatches he called family. “You all do some stupid shit for me okay? Get drunk and do something you shouldn’t do, I won’t be able to, so you’ve gotta do it for me, okay? Have some fun, okay?” Tears formed in Will’s eyes, and he wasn’t ashamed in letting them roll down his face. It wasn’t like he’d live long enough to be embarrassed.

“Oh, Will,” Beverly rounded him up in a hug, Price and Zeller coming around to do the same to him. “I’m gonna commit acts of arson for you buddy,”

“It’s the one thing that’s come from your mouth that I’ll listen to Will,” Zeller jested.

“Probably shouldn’t,” Price muttered into Will’s shoulder. “Probably shouldn’t say that in front of Sheriff,”

Sheriff Crawford shrugged.

“Take care of Abi for me, okay?” Will asked quietly. “Make sure she tells Marissia how she feels eventually, will you?”

“Of course Will,” They said in unison.

Abigail cleared her throat, announcing her presence. The dogs barked to announce theirs.

“Oh, Abi, you came?” Will broke from the trio’s hold and approached Abigail.

“Of course I did,” Abigail said. “I brought the dogs, they won’t like it without you Will, they love you. I thought they should at least get the chance to see you go,”

Will smiled softly, reaching down to pet them. “I’m glad I got to say goodbye to them. They might miss me, but that’s why they need you around Abigail, if you’ll have them,”

Abigail began to cry then, hot tears running down her face. “I don’t want to, not without you,”

“You’ll have to,” Will wrapped her in a tight hug. “You’ll have to Abi, I can’t not go,”

“It’s not fair,”

“Maybe not, but it’s necessary,”

Abigail pulled away, sniffing and wiping her face. “Don’t be so reasonable, it’s awful,”

Will laughed. “I hate it too, I curse gods and godchildren for it, may they all step on a certain lady’s stray beads for what they’ve done-”

“*Willlll*,” Abigail laughed and hiccuped, playfully pushing him.

“I’m just saying if you used the bowl-”

“The bowl was too small I wouldn’t have been able to get the beads out-”

Sheriff Crawford coughed, calling their attention to him. Will could have had his head for breaking their moment, that small moment it all felt normal again, like nothing was going to happen. “It’s getting late you two, Will should be going now, before Hannibal gets antsy,”

Will huffed and turned back to Abigail. “Well, that is my cue Abi,”

Abigail nodded, looking down sadly.

“You’ll live through this, I promise. It doesn’t feel like it, but you’ll be okay someday Abigail, you’ll move on, I know it,”

Abigail shook her head. “I won’t move on, and you can’t make me. But I’ll live, for you,”

“Try living for yourself, it’s better that way. You can make sure Beverly doesn’t steal my flannels for me though,” Will picked up his basket and began the walk to his end. Without his family, the cold seemed to seep in quicker, chilling him and making him shiver.

“Wait! Will!” Abigail shouted after him.

“Abigail…”

“I love you dad!” Abigail cried out, with all her lungs. “I love you!”

Will could have fallen to the ground with that, his heart stopped completely at those simple little words. Gods, how could they be so cruel and so kind at the same time, giving him this, but only when he’s about to die.

“I love you! My daughter! I love you!” Will shouted back, then he began running off into the throat of the woods. He knew if he stayed longer, he would be late to Hannibal, and being late was incredibly rude. Hannibal hated rude people, even if he was already going to eat Will, being late would make him cruel.

He ran and ran, breath puffing into little clouds as he panted. He reached into the little basket as he ran, and pulled out the blade from underneath the preserve jar, hiding it in his sleeve. He wouldn’t hurt Hannibal too bad, but he’d make him ache a little. For making his daughter suffer, Hannibal could ache.

A laugh echoed throughout the woods, heavy, thundering hoof falls followed it, stopping Will in his tracks. From the treeline, a hulking figure approached, then emerged. Will’s legs shook.

Gods, he was *big*. *Really big.*

“What a meager sacrifice,”

In Which, The Lamb Strikes, and The Butcher Falls In Love

Chapter Summary

The Stag God and his sacrifice meet.

Chapter Notes

I am GAY FOR STAG GOD HANNIBAL AAAAA

"I saw it Will,"

Will raised an eyebrow at Abigail, who was nose deep in carefully packing the basket that would go to Hannibal. It wouldn't do if anything broke in the flurry of things.

"I saw what Sheriff Crawford did, when you ran up to him," Abigail continued. "He gave you a knife, I thought I had imagined it for a moment, but I felt your hand curled around something when you held me,"

"Sheriff Crawford wants me to do something extremely stupid and risky,"

"Sheriff isn't the only one,"

"Abigail…"

Abigail huffed, ripping the thick brown packing paper as she pushed it aside roughly. "Don't *Abigail* me Will. I hate him, for taking you, for making it so you have to go lest we all face destruction. I want him to hurt a little too,"

"And I'd be risking destruction if I did that too," Will set a gentle hand on Abigail's shoulder. "You know that much,"

"You've got to have at least thought of it," Abigail insisted. "I think I'd take a part of his leg, and I'd make a bag out of it, and if I even had to go to him I'd take my bag made of his leg-skin,"

Will had thought about it. He was thinking about it. "Don't be like that Abigail,"

Abigail's face fell further, she turned back to her work. "At least, think about it,"

Will did think about it.

-

Will had heard stories throughout his life, of the grand size of Hannibal. As big as a house, his childhood friend told him, big as the tallest trees, his first love said, bigger than we could imagine, his father said, before he went to die. All of it were stories, to make children scared of the forest so they wouldn't roam, to scare friends and to test their bravery in getting the ball from the edge of the forest, to make lovers cuddle closer. None of it was ever sure, no one lived long enough to find out, anyway. Even if they did, they never spoke of it.

He knew now that they were all wrong, Hannibal was massive, hulking, twice, god maybe nearly three times Will's height. Double his stature too, with broad shoulders, strong arms, and thick thighs covered in fur as black as charcoal.

Hannibal stared at him curiously, those maroon eyes bearing down on him like they saw right through his feeble skin and knew him entirely.

Will trembled, quivering like shaken gelatin, and dropped the knife at his feet.

It was from fear, he swore, but deep down he felt something else seeing Hannibal in all his raw glory. He was deadly, huge and tempered and a god. Will was afraid, but he couldn't help but think Hannibal was beautiful, couldn't help but be entranced by him.

"What a meager offering," Hannibal sighed, and if Will weren't already trembling the god's voice alone would've made him shake. "Do they not feed you well in advance anymore? Or was our good lady of the earth Silt stingy with harvest this year? I should hope it's not that you weren't grateful for the good hunting this year,"

Will didn't know what to say, if he should say anything. So he didn't say anything.

"Answer me, human," Hannibal came down to his knees, leaning in close to Will.

"I-I…" Will's mouth felt dry, why wasn't he being torn apart? And why oh why dear gods, did Hannibal have to make his heart skip with feelings aside from fear. "It's not…it's not the village's fault my god, don't blame them…"

"What should I not blame them for?" Hannibal leaned even closer in, Will could have touched the god's long grayish braids if he so wanted.

"For-for my state- they would have given you my daughter and I-" He began stepping back, his mouth running nonsense until he felt something under his foot.

The knife.

Hannibal hadn't noticed it.

It glinted silver in the moonlight, looking like for a moment, a part of the snow.

Will didn't think in that moment, he was confused, hot in the cold, angry again for this teasing, angry that he would never see his daughter again, that his daughter was ever in

danger, and the most prominent thing that would be in his mind when Hannibal stopped toying with him would be those deep maroon eyes.

He picked up the knife and before Hannibal could so much as pick him up to dash him dead against a tree, he slashed it across the God's face.

From the start of Hannibal's shapely lips to top of his throat, there was a jagged gash. It wasn't deep, but it oozed blood, black in the moonlight. Will wanted to do it again, make him bleed that beautiful black again. More. He wanted to taste it on his lips. Gods, he was surely going mad now, the scent of coppery blood finally sending him into his raving madness.

It shouldn't feel this good to watch even Hannibal bleed.

Hannibal was shocked silent. He reached up and smeared some of the blood off with his hand, staring at it for a moment as if to assure himself of it's reality before licking it off.

He turned back to Will, and instead of rage or bloodthirst, all Will saw was…curiosity? Adoration even. Will couldn't understand, this should've had him twisted in half like the wrapping of a plastic straw, not adored.

"It had been a very long time since anybody had made me bleed," Hannibal plucked the basket and knife from Will's hands and set them on the forest floor, then picked him up. Will struggled and whimpered, like a chick being picked up by human hands for the first time. He was held gently though, and Hannibal's hands were so warm. He settled down fast. "I had almost forgotten what it was like to bleed because of another. You are a very strange human. Tell me, did you plan to do this? When you were preparing yourself, did you toy with the idea of wounding me with your little blade? Did you think you could deny me my life perhaps?"

"No," Will breathed. "I could never deny you your life, never,"

"My freedom then?" Hannibal asked. "Did you think if you harmed me you may be able to contain me?"

Will shook his head, god he couldn't get enough air for this. There would never be enough air. "No, no, gods what chain or cage could hold *you*? I wanted you to hurt, I wanted you to lose something like I had lost. I would have taken your eye," What was this, all this honesty? He didn't have to answer a single question, Hannibal was going to eat him for the gods' sakes. There was no reason to try and appease him with answer. But nonetheless, Will spoke freely, though he left details here and there out.

"An eye for an eye," Hannibal mused. "I don't think I need to finish that for you, you seem smart,"

"It would've felt good, I thought about crushing your eye under my fingers, so you could never think about putting it back in," Will gasped as Hannibal squeezed him. "It's not the only thoughts I've had,"

Hannibal made a pleased rumble. “Hmmm, you are so interesting. It’s never been this way before, you want to hurt me,”

“And I worship you,”

“Yes,” Hannibal nodded. “The two feelings are not uncommon in my followers, you are the first in centuries, perhaps millenia to act it out. I find that incredibly curious,”

Will shivered again, truly from the cold this time. The gown, while thicker than the fall or summer garb, was not meant to last more than the walk to Hannibal’s domain.

“You are cold,” Hannibal pointed out. “We will go to my den now, it would be very tragic to find you dead of hypothermia, we will continue this conversation later, dear human,”

“It’s Will,” Will chattered out.

Hannibal smiled, and for a stag, his mouth contained four very sharp fangs. Will wondered what it would be like to be bitten by them.

“Dear Will,”

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed! If you did, feel free to leave a comment and kudos! Otherwise I hope you have a lovely day.

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